

CIA - General

3 Docs

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NBC NEWS PRESENTS

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GARRICK UTLEY: Good evening and welcome to CHRONOLOG. I'm Garrick Utley. This evening, we'll report on one of the major untold stories of the war in IndoChina. It's about a secret army operating in Laos whose fighting men are trained, equipped, advised and paid by the United States Central Intelligence Agency.

The North Vietnamese know about this clandestine army, most Americans don't. But our exclusive film will show this secret army in action against the North Vietnamese and we'll get some idea of the extent of the current American involvement in Laos.

Also this evening, we'll hear from people nobody listens to very much but who have some important things to say. Old people and people who live in the heartland of this country.

Our essay on aging shows what some people are doing to make it just a little easier to grow old in a big city in New York and how some elderly people have banded together to help each other fight the problems of survival and loneliness.

We'll begin in a moment with our first report about people in Black River Falls, Wisconsin and what they're thinking about as the primary election approaches.

We went to this town in rural west central Wisconsin for the simple reason that national political candidates never go there. They campaign in the more populated sections of the state. Politicians and pundits are always telling us what's bothering people in towns like Black River Falls. In a moment, the people who live there will tell us themselves.

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UTLEY: Just about every day the farmers of Black River Falls, Wisconsin gather at the Sunset Tavern to play cards. They also talk about what's bothering them.

MAN: The average working man is in a sense free. The only people that make a decent wage is the union man. I'm a hundred percent union man but these people are in the end going to strike themselves out of the marketplace.

MAN: The biggest trouble around here is the school tax. School taxes are outrageous.

MAN: One thing I would like to see changed on taxes is that they go to work and tax the corporations. Heck of a lot more than they've been doing.

UTLEY: This is Main Street, Black River Falls, Wisconsin.

Population about thirty-three hundred. It's the county seat of Jackson County.

Black River Falls is a town without a traffic light; it's a town on a first name basis. It's not a very prosperous place. Unemployment in the county runs eight to twelve percent a year. Business around here is mainly farming; there's some industry. And the shores and lakes around Black River Falls make it a nice recreational area. It's a nice place to visit and a nice place to live. The nearest city is more than an hour's drive away.

No candidates in a Presidential primary or election has ever campaigned here in Black River Falls and none is scheduled to this time. But that doesn't bother people here. They like their sense of isolation. They like to feel that they are sheltered from the unpleasant problems of larger communities.

ANNOUNCER: It's now five minutes after two o'clock at WWIS Radio in Black River Falls, Wisconsin.

UTLEY: The local radio station carries little foreign or national news. Nor will it cover the Wisconsin primary. But it does keep people of Black River Falls up to date on local happenings.

ANNOUNCER: Good afternoon, everyone. And welcome to the Community Bulletin Board on WWIS Radio. The program that helps to keep you well informed on community and organizational happenings around the Black River Country area. On the bulletin board this Monday afternoon, anyone interested in joining the Stamp Collectors Club is asked to please get in touch with Burns Bamberg in Hixton(?). A mother and daughter banquet will be held at the Melrose Methodist Church this evening at 7:30. A complete roast beef dinner will be served. The Jackson County Council of the American Legion will meet at the Melrose Legion Post 439 on Wednesday evening at eight o'clock. All Legionnaires are urged to attend.

UTLEY: The Jackson County Iron Mine is the largest employer in Black River Falls. It started operations three years ago and pays the highest wages in the area. The men belong to the Steel Workers Union. Half of them moved here from larger cities.

UTLEY: What kind of qualities do you look for in potential presidents?

MAN: I don't know. (UNCLEAR) I don't vote Democrat or Republican. I just pick out who I like the best.

UTLEY: Any right now stand out you like?

MAN: None of 'em.

UTLEY: What kind of a man do you think they'd want ...

MAN: I don't know. I think they'd like somebody that's honest for a change. Nobody seems to be for the working man. Like the eighteen year olds to vote. I don't think that there's going to be really to many of them to vote. I've got four children and I don't think that any of them have voted.

UTLEY: Why not?

MAN: One of them is twenty-four years old. Well, they just have the idea that what's the use? They're going to do what they want regardless.

MAN: And I thought we're going to get a little reduction in taxes but they never show us. So, you know, you know, means a little more for us, seems like the big corporations always get the break in taxes but we never get nothing. Working men, you know.

UTLEY: If a candidate came through Black River Falls and promised to lower taxes, would you believe him?

MAN: Well, you hear that stuff every election; you know, they never -- soon as they get elected, why they forget all about it.

UTLEY: I found an underlying negativism in Black River Falls. They mistrust the politicians. It's hard to tell the Republicans and Democrats apart here. The county Democratic chairman is Dr. Al Lehmeier(?). He's aware of this feeling of alienation.

DR. LEHMEIER: I think that perhaps they are discouraged and there's an underlying discontent because they've been through this rigamarole before and they do feel that even if somebody promised these things that they couldn't deliver. And there's a general malaise and disappointment, discontent with our government.

UTLEY: I also talked to the county chairman of the Republican Party.

When a person here is looking at a candidate, say on television, is he looking at the issues or at an image?

CHAIRMAN: Well, my feeling is he's definitely looking at an image. I don't think that the Vietnam issue is going to win a primary in this part of Wisconsin. I think people here will look at 'em and say, can I trust 'em? Do I believe 'em? Is he going to do a good job for me? I think this is the kind of thing that has to get across.

UTLEY: There's no busing problem here. It's a normal way of life for farm children. The problem is getting young people to stay in Black River Falls after they leave school.

MAN: Most of our young people have to go to the large cities to find jobs. And we don't have the industrial base here, we don't have the technical skills. As a result, it's pretty hard to educate them to rationalize ... in education because we can't hire them when we get them educated.

I think the other thing, of course is the general collapse of the rural areas in terms of the movements of the cities. The cities are getting bigger and the rural areas are getting smaller. Smaller population wise. I don't think that -- I think it's a struggle to keep your optimism up. I think many small towns kind of collapse under this type of strain.

UTLEY: Black River Falls is officially classified as an economically depressed area. Unemployment is chronic. Many people are on welfare.

MAN: There's people that is making more than five hundred dollars a month and they got their children on Title Nineteen. And that's on the Welfare. And there are people down here that are asked to work ... (UNCLEAR) And they won't go out and shovel snow or anything else because they're getting the Welfare checks. That's the most unfair thing that I ever saw. I've worked for thirty-four years off and on, construction and driving trucks. And what have you? I've been a cook, I've washed dishes, I've done a lot of things I didn't want to do, but I've always had a job. I took what I got.

(OVERTALK)

MAN: Everybody, it is ... The biggest majority ... (UNCLEAR) ... it's fine for them.

MAN: Us people work. I'm going to have to work.

MAN: But we're dumb enough to work. There's times when the farmers and there's three of 'em here. Would like to have some help in the summertime if ...

MAN: ... couldn't buy 'em.

MAN: You couldn't buy 'em. If you give them their check.

MAN: ... offered 'em more money than what we get at the end of the day, why they'd laugh at us.

MAN: They can't afford to work.

(OVERTALK)

MAN: They get more given to them than they could get if they worked. You can't blame them either.

UTLEY: One of the card players, Gene Peterson, is particularly bitter about the situation. He started sixteen years ago with little money and now runs a prosperous dairy farm.

GENE PETERSON: I always wanted to farm. All I ever thought of. And I had two kids and a wife and a nine hundred dollar debt and from there on I started with old broken down machines and a few scabby looking cows and a lot of hard work.

UTLEY: What bothers you these days?

PETERSON: Well, Welfare mostly.

UTLEY: Why Welfare?

PETERSON: You wanna keep on giving everybody cause they got a sore back or don't want to work, they give 'em that check. I don't think it should be given to them. I think they should have to, if nothing else, put time in on a chair, so many hours, then get paid for it. But at least they gotta report, be there, put in so many hours, like everybody else. Clean up on the roadsides, cut brush if they're able. It don't take much of a man to do something like that.

UTLEY: You can't understand a person who just doesn't want to work?

PETERSON: No. I can't.

UTLEY: It's entirely strange to you.

PETERSON: It just don't make sense. They hate work. It don't seem right.

UTLEY: Frank Rhodes, a grade school dropout is twenty-four years old and out of work. He is married, has one child, with

another on the way. He lives on the poor side of town. There is no plumbing, no toilet in the house. Frank Rhodes gets one hundred ninety dollars a month in Welfare payments. He wants to work but cannot find a job.

FRANK RHODES: There just ain't no more work around here for people and a lot of these people they have got jobs; they've been around for years at a time. I was really out and I was out working I used to go out seven, eight there in the morning, be out till maybe four or five in the afternoon. And we've been pretty near all over the country just about and there just ain't no work. I think instead of spending all this money going up in space capsules and that, the government could take some of it, and put it down here and make places for people to work in that need it. There are a lot of 'em that need it. (UNCLEAR) ... so I just don't care for it. Fact this year, I ain't even listening to 'em when they been on or anything. ...

MAN: I'm a registered Democrat but I have never voted a straight ticket in my life. Since Roosevelt was elected President.

MAN: There's a lot of people like Wallace, they like his views. They like the way he talks.

MAN: I feel I haven't made my mind up. Cause it's either going to be between Wallace or Muskie. That'll have to be in April.

MAN: You won't say, huh?

MAN: That man, when he speaks, he don't care what he says, and he means what he says. And I think he'll do every ... that he -- he'll back up every word that he says.

MAN: Yah, that's true. Me, I'll vote for the man.

MAN: I like to vote for the man.

UTLEY: What are you going to do meantime?

MAN: (UNCLEAR) The man that's the guy that's going to win that you expect him to do for you ...

MAN: Wallace, I think is a good man.

MAN: You'd better believe it.

MAN: I don't know how they're going to ...

MAN: (UNCLEAR) ... when it comes to the primary.

MAN: I just wonder actually ... running this year if the people will even go and do much voting because there's so many of 'em, ... they're just going to be in the way for each other. That's all.

UTLEY: Call it negativism. Or cynicism. Whatever it is, there is a lot of it among voters in Wisconsin. And I suspect throughout the country.

In my travels in Wisconsin I found that people are looking for a leader, someone with charisma and integrity. Someone who inspires confidence. Many people said they want another Eisenhower or another John Kennedy. If anyone like them came along, he could sweep Wisconsin and probably the country. But there isn't any such candidate.

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UTLEY: There is a new breed of political specialist, the television consultant, the highly touted, highly paid expert who is supposed to know how to sell the candidate to the voters through television. Some candidates think television is the most important part of their campaign. Well, if it is, how come John Lindsay who used television lavishly and well in the Florida primary came in fifth while George Wallace who used it relatively little ran away with the vote. Despite that experience, the candidates in Wisconsin are plunging ahead with television. We've assembled the commercials some of them are using and we have asked Alan Gardner(?) to give us a professional critique.

Gardner is a vice president of an advertising agency and a director of the American Association of Political Consultants. He worked on Robert Kennedy's political campaigns for the Senate and Presidency and for the Humphrey-Muskie ticket in 1968.

Mr. Gardner.

ALAN GARDNER: Advertising is the most expensive commodity in a Presidential campaign. More important, it's the only element in a campaign that is totally under the candidate's control. Only in his paid advertising can a candidate say exactly what he wants to say, when and where he wants to say it and as often as he can pay for it.

Senator Muskie's television producer, Bob Squire, spent two years preparing for the primaries. At first he concentrated on portraying Muskie as the one man who could beat Nixon. As

a politician who could communicate easily with the man on the street. But in Florida, the early Muskie advertising was criticized, even by members of Muskie's own staff as being an endless stream of platitudes.

But the words were Muskie's. They were totally without a competitive point of view. The slogan: Muskie for the Country lacked any cutting edge and the commercials didn't attack Muskie's Democratic opponents, directly or by implication. Muskie was running against Nixon and talking about November because he couldn't figure out how to cope with the other Democrats in March.

For Wisconsin, not surprisingly, there's a whole new strategy. Instead of running just vaguely against the President, Senator Muskie is attacking Nixon. He's attacking Wallace, and finally he's speaking on the issues.

MAN: Well, ... take some of the burden off the property tax owner, I will go for it. Otherwise, I will not go for it.

MAN: Excuse me, who are you for for President?

MAN: Muskie.

MAN: The taxpaying citizens of America know Ed Muskie. As a Senator he has fought to reduce the burden of property taxes and to restore some balance to our spending so that our problems at home will get first priority.

MUSKIE: Let me give you one city, one city. Property taxes on a ten thousand dollar house, today's market value, are over nine hundred dollars a year. In eleven years, in eleven years, that house is consumed by its own taxes. You can guess what's happening. You see property after property abandoned, the owners walking away from it. They don't want to touch it. Well, what do you do about those problems? Build a space shuttle?

MAN: Muskie For The Country.

GARDNER: In the Humphrey campaign, they like to do a lot of polling and the advertising strategy is built largely on the information from public opinion research. That's a little like the politician who said show me the way and I will be your leader. According to Humphrey's media director, D.J. Leary, the Senator's strengths are his record of service, his legislative accomplishments and his image as a traditional Democrat. After hearing his slogan, you might guess that if Hubert Humphrey had three legs to stand on, he'd have one foot in Roosevelt's New Deal, one in Truman's Fair Deal, and one in Kennedy's New Frontier.

Here are two thirty-second commercials that lay out that proposition.

MAN: So many people are seeking the Democratic Presidential nomination, it's hard to tell the players without a score card. Who created Medicare? Hubert Humphrey. The Job Corps? Humphrey. The Food Stamp Program? Humphrey. The first water control bill? Hubert Humphrey again. And again. And again. And again. Vote for Hubert Humphrey for President. Humphrey: The People's Democrat.

MAN: There are certain people in life you just want to reach out and touch. Such a man was FDR. And give 'em hell Harry Truman. And young Jack Kennedy. Hubert Humphrey is the same kind of Democrat. Throughout his life, he's fought for the common man, helping him get a fair shake from government. Isn't that what you want? Vote for Humbert Humphrey for President. Humphrey: The People's Democrat.

GARDNER: Humphrey's advertising may be a little bit dull and heavy-handed but it's clear enough. To his hard-core constituency, he's saying, I deserve your support for services rendered. To those who say he's an old idea, he's saying, yes, but a good one. And to those who say, remember 1968, he says: remember I came awfully close. And you ought to give me another chance before you retire me to pasture.

Henry Jackson came to Wisconsin with a serious recognition problem. But that's one thing lots of advertising can help him overcome. So he started using television in Wisconsin earlier than his opponents. The book on Scoop Jackson said he was a somewhat stolid, uncharismatic candidate. And that's largely true. But Gerry Hack(?) the man who's directed Jackson's advertising in every campaign since 1948 has captured the Senator's straight talking, no nonsense manner. So that it comes across on television as good old American common sense.

Jackson's commercials are aimed at a constituency that one of its political advisors have called: unyoung, unpoor, unblack, middle aged, middle class, and middle minded.

MAN: Senator Henry M. Jackson on the drug problem.

SENATOR JACKSON: On drugs, number one requirement is to get our allies to cooperate, especially France and Turkey where most of the heroin is coming in. You have to cut out the source. And education. The family. This is crucial. The real poor, where there's no father present a very difficult situation because there's not that strong family tie. At the other end of the

spectrum, there's a tendency on the part of parents to say, well, we've made a lot of money, we can subcontract out the job of being papa and mama to so and say so. We just write out a check. I've found that you can't subcontract out the job of being papa and mama no matter how famous you may be or how well to do you may be.

MAN: Senator Henry M. Jackson. A good man. He'd make a good President.

GARDNER: South Dakota Senator George McGovern has had to use the same set of commercials, all filmed two months ago, in four different primary states. Frank Mankiewicz one of his top aides characterized McGovern as a non-politician who will set it straight; in other words, a candidate who will be untraditional, unconventional, and uniquely credible. But McGovern's commercials, produced by Oscar Award winner, Charles Guggenheim are extremely traditional and perfectly predictable. They are neat, professional, and not very competitive.

McGOVERN: Now, apparently, the government is so upset about the truth coming out on this Pakistan thing that they've called in the FBI to find out who leaked this information. But why do we do it behind closed doors? It's because they've advocated a course that wouldn't stand the light of the day and the Administration knows that's the case and that's why they didn't want this information to come out. They wanted to work this military arms deal in secret and not tell anybody about it, not tell the Congress, not tell the Press, not tell the American people. If you know where you stand on an issue, and you believe what you're saying, why keep it a secret? We don't have to treat the people of this country like children. If there's any right that we need to re-assert here in the United States, right now, it's the right to know.

MAN: McGovern. Right from the start.

GARDNER: David Garth, Mayor John Lindsay's long-time political aide and television advisor would make very few comments on the record. And he refused to give us any of the Lindsay material. But Lindsay, the youngest, best looking, most charismatic of the leading Democrats, to many, the perfect media candidate came across in his Florida advertising looking stiff and uncomfortable, very different from the smooth and confident John Lindsay we see trading quips with Johnny Carson.

Then there's George Wallace. Among the six leading finishers in Florida, only McGovern spent less on advertising. Yet

Wallace clearly uses television better than any other candidate in America today. Never out of character. Never a false note. And never a comment without a competitive point. In Wisconsin, nobody will have any trouble distinguishing him from the other eleven candidates. In Florida, the Wallace slogan was: Send him a message. The message arrived and none of the other Democrats should have any trouble understanding it.

If you looked at all the Jackson, Humphrey, Muskie, McGovern, and Lindsay commercials, you'd know more about the candidates' similarities than their differences and that's not what advertising is all about. Good advertising is supposed to show how one product or candidate is different or better than the others. If you were advertising a breakfast cereal, and there were fifty other brands, you'd remind your customers that yours was the only one that goes snap, crackle, and pop. But most political commercials simply aren't that competitive. They lack focus because they rarely proceed from a carefully defined strategy. The problem, I think, is that advertising men are trained to simplify complex ideas, while the politician's stock in trade is cluttering up simple ideas.

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UTLEY: Most Americans may not realize it but as the United States tries to extricate itself from Vietnam, there is a continuing and deepening problem in Laos. That tiny kingdom's sovereignty, neutrality, and integrity, guaranteed by the 1962 Geneva Accords are in shreds.

Today, almost two-thirds of Laos is under Communist control. Chinese engineers, protected by Chinese anti-aircraft guns are building this important road which runs from China through Laos to the Mekong River on the border.

And North Vietnamese troops hold large areas near the Ho Chi Minh trail and they are fighting in division strength throughout the middle portion of Laos.

The United States is also deeply involved in Laos but until recently, that involvement was shrouded in secrecy. Apparently, the United States did not want to be accused of violating the Geneva Accords which the Communists ignored from the start.

To conceal this involvement, the United States has funneled money to the CIA through the AID. AID--the Agency For International Development In Laos. Money designated for humanitarian purposes really helps support a secret guerrilla army. That was revealed by Senator Edward Kennedy's committee on refugee problems earlier this week.

The secret war is getting too big to hide. It has escalated into a major conflict and fighting on the American side is one of the oddest collections of soldiers, secret agents, pilots and children that the war in IndoChina has produced.

MAN: This is one of America's allies in Southeast Asia. This young man is eleven years old. He carries an M16 rifle. He tells me he's used it four times already in combat against the North Vietnamese.

MAN: This year's biggest battle in IndoChina is raging not in Vietnam, but here in the mountains of Laos. It pits North Vietnamese regulars against a secret irregular army, organized, advised, supported, and paid by the Central Intelligence Agency.

MAN: ... to the battle is a high ridge line. This is the famous sky line ridge, the keystone of the defensive position at Long Tihn(?). We're getting mortar fire in here right now from the North Vietnamese divisions which surround this place which is why everybody is staying so low. For the past few minutes we've had mortar rounds land within fifteen yards of here.

MAN: Though many of its recruits are under sixteen, the secret army has been the toughest force opposing the communists in Laos. Now, the North Vietnamese are making an all out effort to destroy it. This week there is still heavy fighting around Long Tien.

The secret army now has men from various ethnic groups, but it began among the Mayo(?) Hill tribes. The Mayo or Mung(?) as they call themselves are a fiercely independent people, who thrive in the rugged highlands. Today, most are refugees, clinging to those patches of the mountains, still under government control. Despite ten years of defeat and suffering, most have remained staunch allies of America. Today, with other hill tribes, they are still the backbone of the secret army and make it the closest thing to a people's army on the government side.

They have paid dearly for their commitment. Their camps are built of the debris of war. They move constantly, shifting locations as the war sweeps back and forth across their mountains. At each new spot, they dig in to await the next attack. When there's time between moves, they still plant their opium poppies. For centuries, opium was their only cash crop. But the war has reduced the crops to the point where the Mungs smoke most of it themselves.

This is Boom Long, forty-five miles from the North Vietnamese border and the only major secret army base left in the far north. To get here means a long flight over enemy territory with the pilots dodging anti-aircraft positions.

The only link with the outside world is the air strip and is frequently closed by enemy shell fire. There are six thousand people here, only a few hundred are soldiers advised by the CIA. The rest are women and children.

Boom Long is called the fortress in the sky and it's a fortress under siege. The people spend most of their time repairing the damage from the last enemy attack and digging deeper for the next one.

The local Mung commander requires each family to dig and maintain its own bunker.

Casualties have been high, including hundreds of civilians. Manpower is so scarce that some positions are guarded only by straw dummies. Because of its strategic location, the Mung and their CIA advisors are determined to hold Boom Long as long as possible. That may not be much longer.

Each year the enemy assaults become heavier. The defenses are littered with the bones of North Vietnamese soldiers who have died here. This week, the secret army has been using these positions to attack enemy supply routes. The object: to relieve pressure on Long Tien.

If Long Tien falls, Boom Long will almost certainly be next.

For years, this compound in the village of Long Tien was one of the most secret spots on earth. This was headquarters for the CIA and the secret army in Laos. It was a little bit of America, crammed with sophisticated electronic gear. Journalists called it Spook Heaven. This year Spook Heaven has become part of the front line. The CIA has moved to a new location.

We talked to a CIA man assigned to the secret army. The agency calls him a case officer. He's a civilian, but in any other war, he'd be called a military advisor.

Just what do you CIA men do up here?

CIA MAN: Well, first of all, let me set the record straight: We do not command any of the combat troops. Our primary role is one of supporting the indigenous Lao forces and ... That support involves a number of things. Some of it is technical advice. A great deal of it is training. It involves advice. Our advice is one of keeping them informed on what is possible with the resources that are available.

MAN: What are we trying to accomplish up here?

CIA MAN: Well, the primary aim of the United States government in Laos is to assist the people of Laos to have the kind of government that they want to have. Our job is not one of telling them how to run the war, of having the war become our war. Our task is one of working with them, training them, advising them, letting them make the decisions that they believe are in their national interests. And so far, we have been able to conduct this with very very few Americans.

Vin MAN: The man who commands most of the secret army is General Bang Pao(?). He is a Mung tribesman who worked closely with the CIA in organizing the hill people.

Today, along with his secret army role, he also commands all Lao forces in the most crucial military region. We found him helping his soldiers repair shell holes in the air strip near his headquarters. He is definitely not an arm chair general. He's part war lord, part tribal father figure, and the most effective military leader in Laos today.

When the war permits, Bang Pao spends most of his time with other tribal leaders. The Mung look to him for leadership in politics as well as fighting. But in the tribal hierarchy, Bang Pao is not a dictator, but a sort of first among equals. Decisions are reached only after the traditional long discussions with other clan chiefs.

But Bang Pao's favorite spot is the front line. Some of his American CIA advisors complain that BP as they call him spends too much time in the fox holes and not enough time plotting grand strategy.

But the fact is the soldiers, especially the Mung soldiers fight best when BP is around. And despite his advisors, Bang Pao is not about to change his style. Even when his arrival attracts enemy mortar fire.

Bang Pao likes nothing better than playing the role of an Oriental George Patton and personally directing counter-battery fire.

Tell me, what have we got over in that position he's shooting at?

BANG PAO(?): One demi mortar.

MAN: A one demi mortar. That makes it interesting.

We're up on Skyline Ridge which in terms of the war in

is likely ... legend like Heartbreak Ridge in Korea or Hamburger Hill in Vietnam. These holes we're sitting in right now, up until about forty-eighthours ago were occupied by one of the best North Vietnamese regiments there is. All these positions off to our ... here, are occupied by the North Vietnamese.

The secret army was not designed to slug it out with North Vietnamese divisions. Their performance at Long Tien has surprised most experts. But the fighting there is heavier than ever. And no one knows how long they can keep it up.

Casualties in this year's battles have been the heaviest ever. They are evacuated in American furnished planes and helicopters. Most of those who survive are treated in hospitals paid for and run by the American Agency for International Development.

The dead are also flown out, wrapped in American body bags.

The lightly wounded can expect to be back in the front lines quickly.

They can also expect a visit from General Bang Pao who tries to make sure they get the best care available.

Frequently he is accompanied by an aide de camp with a briefcase full of money.

Bang Pao and his men receive their money direct from the CIA. By passing the corruption that plagues the Lao regular army. By Lao standards, they are very well paid. Critics have suggested that the rice and money from America are the secret army's main motivation.

MAN: No amount of money or rice or medical treatment is going to get any young man to stand up and fight the North Vietnamese. They run the very high risk of being killed or maimed for life. Because, remember. These are irregulars. They're very much like we had in the Revolutionary War in our own country. They volunteer in and they can volunteer out. The Mung attitude is -- this is their homeland. They're here and they're fighting because this is their homeland. They lose this and there's no place else for them to go.

MAN: But each year, the Mung homeland shrinks. The battles are bigger, the casualty lists longer. And there are signs of weariness among the hilltribes.

Bang Pao spends a lot of time visiting the isolated Mung settlements, trying to boost his people's morale. Except for the small local garrison, there are usually few men present.

are all away at the front. One of his unpleasant duties is to inform wives and mothers that their loved ones are dead or missing.

This week, some units of the secret army refused to continue the fight at Long Tien. But they were not hill people. The Mung are a tough and stoic race. And as long as Bang Pao is willing to lead, they seem willing to follow. To continue the fight, the secret army has to look beyond Laos for recruits.

These soldiers are Thai volunteers, recruited and trained in Thailand by the CIA, which also pays them.

The Lao and particularly the hill tribes have been bled white by the war. They have simply run out of manpower. The result is about eight thousand Thai volunteers presently fighting in Laos.

Some Senators claim this violates a Congressional ban on mercenaries being hired to fight in Southeast Asia. Both the Lao and Thai governments are very touchy about the subject. The volunteers have taken heavy casualties in the recent fighting.

Where are you from?

SOLDIER: Bangkok.

MAN: This is a long way from Bangkok. How long have you been here?

SOLDIER: One year.

MAN: You've been here one year?

SOLDIER: Yes.

MAN: You fight the North Vietnamese very much?

SOLDIER: Yeah. I work here one year, but I think it's very long. Ten years.

MAN: One year here seems like ten years. You like it here?

SOLDIER: No. I don't like.

MAN: (Translating) the entire northeastern region of Thailand has a population of about eighteen million Lao. Therefore, these Lao, that is these Thai have a reason to defend Laos as well. This is readily understandable. It is not Thai regulars that we have now, but volunteers.

MAN: His Highness is satisfied that this does not infringe Laos's position in the world as a neutralist country.

MAN: (Translating) This is no problem. They are volunteers who come to fight. As was the case, you know, in France, with the Foreign Legion which includes individuals from all nationalities. So why not in our case?

MAN: Whatever the diplomatic niceties, the Thai volunteers are absolutely necessary. Without them, the secret army and Laos too would probably collapse. Even if that happened, Bang Pao says the Mung will fight on.

MAN: (Translating) Even if the North Vietnamese could take over all our territory, we will take to the jungles to carry on the fight against them, no matter how long it takes, fifty or even one hundred years. We will keep fighting until the North Vietnamese get out of our land.

These days Bang Pao seldom sees his home or children. He has been through crises before, but this year, the military situation is worse than ever. He's troubled for the future of his children and his people. But he says he's confident that America will never simply abandon the hill people.

UTLEY: Given the mood of America, the CIA is hardly a popular organization, but in assessing the role of the agency in Laos, we should remember certain things: it was given the job of organizing a secret army by the United States government. We wanted to preserve the fiction of our adherence to this Geneva Accord while preventing the North Vietnamese from overrunning Laos. The CIA did the job with a minimum of American personnel, money and casualties. For eight years, its rag tag irregulars have fought off some of the best trained and equipped troops in the world.

The CIA performs its mission well, so well in fact that future American governments might be tempted to launch the Agency on similar ventures elsewhere, perhaps as in Laos without the knowledge and consent of any of us.

There are other American civilians involved in the secret war. In a moment, we'll look at them.

* * *

UTLEY: The American effort to fight a secret war has produced some strange situations. The Director for the Agency for International Development has admitted that CIA men use AID humanitarian health

ams as a cover in Laos. There are also reports that AID health funds are being used to provide medical care for irregular soldiers and their dependents. In some cases, CIA men even pose as AID workers.

In Laos itself, most Americans refer to the CIA and its people by the nickname, Brand X, and working for both AID and Brand X is a most peculiar air line called Air America.

Air America is a private charter company which has been flying mysterious missions in Asia for twenty years. Its planes parachuted supplies to the besieged garrison at Dienbienphu. Today, Laos is one of its biggest operations.

Another major charter company in Laos is called Continental Air Services. It's smaller than Air America, but does the same job. Between them, the companies share about thirty million dollars in government contracts. Their pilots are civilians. Their planes are unarmed. But without them, the secret war would be impossible.

MAN: For the civilian charter pilots, the war begins at dawn, when the engines start turning at Vientiane Airport. Air America alone carries twelve million pounds of cargo and nearly ten thousand people out of Vientiane each month. Their destinations are diverse and often dangerous.

MAN: Well, now, on the unfriendly activity which was heard off to the South, I don't see the same marks that were on the previous chart. But here it again it looks like perhaps we've lost that unfriendly activity.

MAN: There are very few milk runs left in Laos. At pilot briefings, the latest reports on enemy anti-aircraft positions are as important as the weather.

MAN: Good chance you may pick up some unfriendly fire.

MAN: Pilots say the only thing worse than flying in Laos is trying to land there. By local standards, this dirt strip set between mountains is a major airport. It is now the secret army's headquarters in Northern Laos. Big planes bring the cargo in and from here smaller planes and helicopters haul it to a hundred different sites in the surrounding mountains. These days, much of the cargo is ammunition, most of it parachuted to what the pilots call the friendly.

The control tower is primitive, and there are no navigation aids, yet between daylight and dusk, this strip handles nine hundred take-offs and landings each day.

some of the planes end up like this. As one pilot said, America is not exactly like flying for Pan American out of K.

This was one of Air America's major operation centers until the enemy overran it. The combination of danger, superb flying, and exotic locale, plus a tradition of secrecy has led to some highly sensational reporting about Air America. Its pilots have been called America's flying foreign legion. And the Lord Jims of Laos.

MAN: What is Air America?

MAN: Well, it's the same thing today that it always has been, that is, a charter air carrier whose major customer is the United States government and it's nothing more or less than that. The average age by the way is forty-three out here, so that they're not a bunch of apple cheeks youngsters who are looking for big thrills. Most of them have already had their thrills.

MAN: ... as an example ... of an area ... this year ... one airplane ...

MAN: What's the worst thing about flying out here? The mountains, the weather, or the bad guys.

MAN: It's a combination of all three. We have three distinct flying seasons, either smoky, windy, or rainy. And any one of the three combined with the enemy ... situation that none of us like.

MAN: Well, you don't really have a happy season.

MAN: No. Guess not.

MAN: How long do you plan to keep this up?

MAN: Each year, I say it's my last one. This is my seventh year now.

MAN: (UNCLEAR)

MAN: Money. Well, not really. ... big influence, of course. I have two daughters to put through school yet out of my ... so, even though I'm retired, I still have to work.

MAN: Do you like the guys you work with?

MAN: They're a real bunch of pros, every one of them.

MAN: We have an extreme sense of comradeship and a sense of competition that I think is not excelled in any profession.

MAN: Let's say the U.S. government, put, let's say five hundred thousand troops into North Vietnam to accomplish the same job that we're accomplishing with a handful of so to speak, American professionals.

MAN: We have a ... to sell and we can't sell it anyplace in the world, except right here.

MAN: (UNCLEAR) ... about it, take this war away, or if we quit, you're talking about why we do it; if most of us went back to the United States, we would be a dirty old man.

(OVERTALK)

MAN: ... it is a different operation, I think, than you'll find anyplace in the world, but on the other hand, as far as professional standards go, we do meet the requirements of any major airline regardless of where it is throughout the world.

MAN: It is becoming tougher, but it hasn't reached the point where we're giving up by any stretch of the imagination. All of us are very talented, very very talented. And we can avoid what they have given us so far, but it is becoming a little more difficult for us to do.

MAN: But we are really, all, most all, highly experienced, qualified people, and we've gone through this thing before and it's ...

MAN: It's a business. It is not a romantic, devil may care operation. We carry a lot of wounded people and if we weren't there to carry them, they'd die, and about the time you participated in some of these uplifts of seriously wounded men, you get the feeling there's a reason for being here. We move refugees by the thousands. And this again is a very heartwarming experience for a pilot and those of us on the ground, because if we didn't move them, they'd be overrun and made prisoners and made bearers by the opposition. And we carry rice. We carry food to the people. Medical supplies.

MAN: Rice is dropped in eighty pound sacks. Nearly one quarter of the country's population are displaced persons. Most have fled the communists. Some have fled our bombing of the communists. A quarter of a million people are outright refugees, existing on American handouts. Over a hundred thousand depend on aerial delivery for survival. Supervising the relief

... is a handful of AID men. They spend most of their time at remote locations like this. It's a measure of the loyalty of the hill tribes, that in ten years of wandering, unarmed, through the Communist infested mountains, not a single AID man has been betrayed to the enemy.

They are not CIA agents. Their job is to help refugees. But even this function is indirectly linked to the war. If enough refugees flee the enemy, the communists may be left trying to conduct a people's war without people. The AID program also runs hospitals. This one treats over forty thousand people a year. Many of them are flown in by Air American and Continental.

This little girl was hit by grenade fragments in a remote village. Few Americans object to this sort of American involvement in Laos. But the General Accounting Office reports that much of the AID money Congress thought it was appropriating for civilian health care was being used for medical support of the secret army.

Until recently, at least, even deceiving the United States Congress was considered a legitimate tactic of the secret war.

The latest North Vietnamese offensive has already created fifty thousand new refugees. Most of them are Mung tribesmen and for most of them, this is the third time they've been uprooted. At their last location, AID had provided them with homes, schools, and a dispensary. Now they're back to square one, huddled on a bleak hilltop, sheltered by parachutes and scrap lumber. They are both tired of the war and nervous about a peace settlement that would abandon them.

In the meantime, they depend on the charter planes for everything and with the pilots of those planes, landing strips like this are becoming riskier every day.

MAN: Has this increase in enemy activity and the loss of real estate, has this affected the morale of the pilots?

MAN: No, I think it's probably made them more cautious. It can ruin your whole day if you land at somebody else's air strip, or one that you think is friendly and you find out that it isn't the hard way.

MAN: That very thing recently happened to one Air America pilot. His wrecked aircraft still sits like a squashed bug on the enemy held airstrip.

MAN: People on the airplane talk to people on the ground and they said everything's ... and land, and so I had with

... suggested I shut the engines down, so I turned engine off, and this was one of the first mistakes I made that day. The minute that the prop started turning -- stopped turning, they started shooting at us. (UNCLEAR) ... and the ... was already outside the airplane, and he hollered at me let's go, and this didn't take a lot of encouragement and I -- since the airplane was done, it was unwound, I leapt out of it too, and I still, though, was laboring under the illusion that when it's all over, I'm going to get back in my machine and fly out of there. This is what aviators do, they don't walk off, they fly.

MAN: Two days after losing his plane, and nearly losing his life, Jim Russell was flying again.

The first battle of Long Tien was reaching its climax and only the performance of the charter planes enabled the secret army to turn almost certain defeat into at least a temporary standoff.

Only helicopters could land to pluck out the seriously wounded. North Vietnamese artillery was shelling the airstrip. Enemy snipers were firing up at the planes. Enemy machine guns on the hills were firing down at the plane. But the friendlys were out of war and ammunition so the planes went in anyway. They shared the narrow airspace with fighter bombers, trying to blast the enemy off the ridgeline. To the charter pilots, it was just another mission.

MAN: It goes in spurts. Last February, for example, when we didn't have so much heavy antiaircraft, we had twenty-seven planes hit in one months ...

MAN: Twenty-seven airplanes hit in one month?

MAN: Yes. Yes. This December when the flak was more intense, we had twenty-four airplanes hit. However, the hits can be more serious, because you're dealing with a larger calibre of weapon.

MAN: But that is part of the challenge; that is part of why we are here. And it's not a death wish by any stretch of the imagination. It is a little competition with the other side. And try to survive. And use my talents against their talents. And usually win.

(OVERTALK)

MAN: The favorite watering spot for the oddball warriors of this oddball war is the Purple Porpoise Bar, the clientele includes spooks, military attaches, pilots, and diplomats.

(OVERTALK)

MAN: The pub keeper is a misplaced Englishman who calls himself Monty Banks. He gives away nearly as much booze as he sells and to make sure his clients can discuss their clandestine business in private, he frequently places his saloon off limits to journalists.

(SINGING: Lay them pistols down)

MONTY BANKS(?): The Americans that are in this town are the first Americans I've yet met. The peoples that walk into my bar, the Americans, collectively are human beings who love humanity.

UTLEY: Daredevil pilots dropping American rice and ammunition are one aspect of the war in Laos. War planes dropping American bombs are another and even more controversial issue. We'll look at that side of the war in a moment.

* * *

UTLEY: One of the tragic ironies of the war in Laos is that in this age of ideologies, this war is probably less a question of ideology than of simple geography. The strength of the local communist Pathet Lao has actually decreased in recent years. But North Vietnamese regiments and cadres have more than made up the difference.

We, too, have escalated our effort. Laos was once described as a warm, green paradise where all a man needed to live was a small knife to peel bananas and a large knife to kill pigs. But today the knives have been replaced by tanks and heavy artillery on the enemy side. And bombs and napalm on our side.

MAN: Legend has it that whenever a city of Vientiane was threatened by invaders, the monks of this temple would pray and beat the sacred drum to summon forth a dragon which protected the city.

Today the very existence of Laos is threatened. But there is no dragon to help. Even in the best of times, Laos is a fragile country. The only unifying force is allegiance to the King. Even the Communists pay lip service to the throne. But that doesn't keep them from shelling the royal capital.

After nearly one billion dollars in American military assistance, the Lao regular army still leaves a lot to be desired. It does not fight well but it has been fighting a long time.

over one-third of these military academy cadets are children of men killed in action.

For the most part the children of the rich and powerful don't have to worry about the army. They don't seem to worry much about the war either. Millions of dollars in American aid have helped make Vientiane a swinging town.

Usually, only those without money or political connections end up in the army. They are poorly paid and usually poorly led. They have little motivation. Many units have become expert at avoiding confrontations with the enemy.

The main military factor in staving off the collapse of what is left of Laos is a massive bombing campaign. It involves navy and air force jets including B-52s as well as the U.S. supported Royal Lao Air Force.

Most of the strikes in Laos are directed by American Air Force officers called FACS or Forward Air Controllers. Accompanied by a Laotian observer, they cruise over enemy territory in a light plane, armed only with smoke rockets. Their task is to locate and mark the targets for the bombers. It's probably the most dangerous job in Laos.

No one in Washington or Vientiane will say just how many bombs are being dropped or exactly where. But the FACs say civilian targets are avoided.

MAN: We recently ... a hundred percent of the Cong military targets. We have a system of insurances. We carry a Laotian to talk to Laotians that don't speak English and they verify our targets. There are certain places that are just obviously unfriendly and any of the target trucks, boats, supplies that we found are military targets. And such targets where civilians may live like villages or ... somewhere, we stay strictly away from these.

MAN: Well, the North Vietnamese are pretty smart people, knowing you're trying to avoid civilian targets, they concentrate their supply effort in a civilian type area.

MAN: What happens then?

MAN: Well, okay, of course they're, they've got their one system, and they use it all the time. They put supplies in villages and we can't hit it. And of course, the Laotians fly Laotian airplanes and there are occasions where maybe the target is important enough and Laotians, strictly Laotians, with Americans, no American involvement whatsoever, hit targets that they consider to be of vital importance.

MAN: The Royal Lao Air Force is an American created by product of the secret war. It's trained, equipped and advised by Americans. And in a country where fighting spirit is hard to find, the Air Force has become an elite force. The pride of the Air Force are these fighter bomber pilots. Actually, their fighter bombers are T-28s, originally built as trainers during the Korean War, but they are rugged, easy to maintain and carry a surprisingly large load of bombs, rockets, and napalm.

With forty T-28s, the Lao Air Force flies up to four thousand missions a month. The pilots quickly become veterans. They are paid about fifty-five dollars a month plus a bonus of one dollar and sixty cents per combat mission. By any standard, their losses have been heavy.

The sons of two Laotian Cabinet ministers are among the pilots who have been killed.

This year's enemy offensive has put new strains on the Air Force. There are more missions and more enemy anti-aircraft guns. For the pilots we flew with recently, it was their fifth mission of the day. Except for a short lunch break, they had already spent seven hours in their cockpits.

There were five strike planes on the mission. All of them loaded with a complete assortment of lethal ordnance. I flew in the back seat of a strike plane. NBC News Cameraman Charles Speckaday(?) flew in the American piloted FAC plane which was pinpointing the targets for the strikes.

MAN: We've just had the targets marked here and now we're going to try to go in and clobber it.

MAN: The target was a Laotian army outpost that had been overrun the night before.

MAN: We've just completed our first turn. We're going around again now.

MAN: After a day's flying, there is happy hour, often a mixture of American whiskey and Lao dancing. One pilot told me the whisky helps him forget the twelve point sevens. He was referring to the twelve point seven millimeter heavy machine guns which are one of the Communist's favorite and most deadly anti-aircraft weapons.

MAN: That thought always exists in the back of your mind. You never know, of course, when somebody's going to pull in a twelve-seven. Whenever I go into a new area, I'm always

... careful to at least stay above the effective range of the twelve-
seven and then today it was particularly true that I had no idea
what to expect cause the friendly's had reported trucks moving
in the area and they could have been bringing in anything so
I started out in the area fairly high. But they don't have a
tendency to shoot at FACs so much unless they're reasonably sure
that they can get them. Once they give away their position,
then we call in too many air strikes and so they generally stay
away until they're sure they can either get a FAC or else they
can get the strike aircraft.

MAN: The Forward Air Controllers have become a special
breed. Their uniform usually consist of blue jeans, camouflage
survival vests, and a Colt revolver.

They are mostly captains and lieutenants in their early
twenties. They're proud of their work. This one, George Towsley(?)
graduated from the Air Force Academy in 1969. Before that,
he was an Eagle Scout.

How long do you normally stay out on one of these missions?

GEORGE TOWSLEY: We can go for about three hours with the
fuel we have. ... three point five missions, four hours,
about, the very most this airplane can go. And that leaves us
no reserve. So three point five.

MAN: Will you be relieved by somebody else then or ...

TOWSLEY: No. I'm taking off now and I'll go till about
five o'clock and then I start going back home and ... day, we
fly in the day time.

MAN: Good luck.

TOWSLEY: Thank you.

MAN: Six weeks ago, George Towsley's luck ran out. He
was killed over Laos. Nobody knows how many Americans have died
there. That part of the secret war is still secret.

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UTLEY: In the film essay we're about to see, old people
talk about themselves. They're members of the Good Companions
Club at the Henry Street Settlement House on New York's Lower
East Side. And they're typical of a large segment of our population.
People over sixty-five who live alone for the most part, who
live in fear of crime, who live on fixed incomes that don't come
close to matching today's high prices.

More than most people who live in our big cities, they feel loneliness and isolation. But the Good Companions have banded together to help each other and if they have a message, it may be simply this, that the problems of the elderly must be solved not by massive government programs or conferences or sociological research, but by ordinary people who will take the time to listen and help and care.

WOMAN: It's a terrible feeling to be set aside. All cultures have had their old with them. Why do we have to sort of isolate our old? We're always isolating every group. Why does it have to be?

MAN: It's a very bad day for old people all over this country. First of all, we call them senior citizens and it's a terrible phrase, or the golden age. The golden age really doesn't exist. All of us are scared of being old. We're scared of being unemployed, of being unable to live by ourselves, to be -- have the door closed by our children. We have to care about our neighbors. If we have an old man or an old woman living next door, do we look in on them? If a neighbor down the hall doesn't have enough food to eat, the neighbors in the building bring food to him, or do we hook that man up with a social agency that can help him or do we just put him out of sight and out of mind, and say, well, someone will get to him. And oftentimes, someone never gets to him and the man or the woman dies in their apartment or dies in their home and are not found till weeks later.

UTLEY: On New York's Lower East Side, there is the Henry Street Settlement House, for many old people who have been coming here for a lifetime, it was a place where immigrant children first learned the new American way of life.

Today, as they survive on an average income of eleven hundred dollars a year, it's their refuge from the loneliness, and isolation of old age. A place to go to, to meet friends, talk over problems, to mend clothes or make new ones. The Center is busy during the day but not after dark. For some old people, Henry Street provides a chance to develop the artistic talents they had to set aside during the long years when they were earning a living and raising families.

WOMAN: I am seventy-one years old. And I live alone. I get a hundred and forty-one dollars and fifty cents for social security and I often think of how I would be able to exist if it weren't for my children helping me.

I have a feeling that one has to keep learning all the time. This is very important to me, that I learn, I try to find every

...some additional knowledge that I have obtained, and I think that's great. I hope that goes on. And when I stop that, I just want to die.

MAN: I come to the club to play a game of pinochle in the afternoon, and have my lunch there sometime, now, usually, I get home at three o'clock, when the children come out of school. So that I can go up with the children and feel safer in the elevator when I go up into my apartment.

MAN: I've been living there now for the past eleven years and there's been a terrific change in that particular building where in the last year or two, I have been mugged and stabbed five different times, landed in the hospital on two occasions where I just barely pulled through. Now when you reach eighty-four years old, that's a hell of a way to spend the old years.

MAN: We need a mass commitment of money, to programs for the aged, through service programs. You know, some people say, well, we're going to increase Social Security and that's going to solve all the problems. Well, that's a panacea. You can give old people money and many of them won't spend it. I think we need to create services, not dependent services, but services that foster independence.

One can't overestimate the importance of a nutrition program for old people who don't have the option to buy adequate amounts of food to prepare themselves or who just don't want to eat alone. And so two hundred people can come down in our dining room and have a decent hot meal. Supervised by a nutritionist and what's most important, be able to eat with their friends, eat with people their own age and the people who have come to our center could have the meal for free, but they said, we don't want a hand out, we don't want charity and they decide to pay sixty cents. And the sixty cents ... dignity into a program.

MAN: If a person is capable, and he can walk and he can talk, and he can speak, he should not stay alone in the house, he should go out among people. ... your own kind, your own type of people and your own age, you'll feel more at home.

WOMAN: I don't get much money, but I save ninety-seven dollars a month. I live on it because I eat here five days a week and I find myself saving by doing that. Everybody says, how do you live? I ... don't buy a lot of clothes ... here most of the time. I make it. So far, I've made it. And maybe I won't live much longer to make it, but I've made it so far.

WOMAN: I think everybody knows old people are neglected. I wish I was young.

WILEY: Nutrition is a problem. But so is loneliness. There are a lot of people on the lower East Side who can't get to the settlement house because of poor health. So every day, members of the Henry Street Good Companions Club deliver hot lunches. For the elderly volunteers like Mrs. Jenny Dubin, it's a chance to help other people. As she says, it's better than sitting home alone, just withering away.

MRS. DUBIN: March is my birthday. I'll be eighty years. And I live all alone. And I get Social Security and a check from the union. It totals about two hundred dollars a month. I pay rent, and the rest is left for me to live on and spend. I joined ... in order to keep busy -- not to stay home. And I moan and groan. We do volunteer work. We take care of sick people to visit them, just friendly visits and we take hot lunches from this club. Especially to the sick people that are home bound and bed ridden, we take hot lunches to them. And I think it's a wonderful thing to do, the lunches are very important. Oh, she's wonderful. She's really terrific. She's a hundred and five years old. She still goes strong. Well, she has a woman that takes care of her, but as soon as she heard that we are coming to take pictures, well, she was all dressed up, she wore a nice wig, she looked gorgeous today, she really looked pretty and she was so happy to see us.

MAN: We say people are living on eleven hundred dollars a year, living on social security, you don't live on social security, you don't even exist on social security, what you do is you starve on social security, become lonely on social security; you have no friends that you meet on social security; you have to live in a dive or a dump or a welfare hotel or a tenement on social security; this is what happens to people who just live on social security. It's not really living; it's kind of a waiting. A death. And many old people are waiting for death, waiting in desperation, some miracle to happen. And the miracle is not going to happen. It's only going to happen when people in this country make a commitment to older people and it's not only the government that has to make a commitment, the private sector has to make a commitment too.

MAN: You know, I recall the time when my wife's grandparents and my own; we had a home where we had eighteen rooms. We made room for our grandparents at that time. Today the children don't seem to want their grandparents to stay with them anymore or even their parents. They just feel that they have small apartments and they just don't have the room to take care of older people today.

WOMAN: When I go into an old age room, it makes me awfully sad, I just feel terrible, and I always tell my children, please

that to me, if I'm ill, I'm able to get around, please
do that to me. The whole family unit should be intact.
vital for little children to see their grandparents and
feel and understand. I have a grandchild of thirteen and
when she was three, she would ask me such pertinent questions:
Grandma, are you lonely, well, who isn't lonely? Who isn't lonely
in our world? I think the moment we leave the womb, we're lonely.
don't you?

UTLEY: A man who works with the old people at the Henry
street Settlement, made a novel suggestion and it seems appropriate
to pass it along at this time when most of us are doing our income
tax. He suggests a standard income tax deduction for people
who would be willing to adopt, not a child, but an old person,
someone who has no family or who is just not wanted. The foster
grandfather or grandmother wouldn't have to live with you, but
you would be required to make sure the old person had good clothes
and good food. And most important, to get the deduction, you
would be required to visit your adopted old person at least once
a week.

* * *

UTLEY: Time now for CHRONOLOG II where we look at the less
serious side of our world. For example, what can you say about
a motel suite that costs twenty-five hundred dollars a night,
has thirteen rooms and twelve bathrooms? It's in Texas. Where
else? Houston, Texas. And it's the work of Judge Roy Hofheinz
who built the Astrodome and is the chairman of the board of the
Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey Circus.

The suite is the top floor of the Astro World Hotel and
it was designed by Harper Galt(?) an Academy Award winning art
director who has been a set designer for Walt Disney. Well,
the suite proves that Hollywood hasn't died; it's just been restaged
in Houston.

MAN: This suite, obviously is not designed for the use
of the rabble.

MAN: This private elevator raises the paying customer to
new heights of conspicuous consumption.

MAN: When I was first talked to by Judge Hofheinz about
this suite, he told me, now I want this to be the goldangdest
penthouse that was ever made.

This is the Crusader Room. And that's the bedroom in the
Celestial Suite. And if you want the ultimate in virility,
what better than the place that the crusaders slept?

MAN: For twenty-five hundred dollars a day, I'd be so nervous I couldn't sleep.

MAN: The wealthy and those striving to appear wealthy can buy their fantasies here in what to some is medieval glory and to others Texas gaudy.

WOMAN: I think the suite is a lot like -- it's a lot like Alice in Wonderland and the circus all rolled into one along with maybe a castle or two thrown in.

The one good thing about this place, it's sort of like a costume party. When people walk into this place, they immediately lose their inhibitions.

MAN: Well, they've invented a communal bath and shower where four or five can enjoy the shower at the same time. We have a tub where eight or ten people can enjoy the bath together at the same time. (UNCLEAR)

WOMAN: Women are particularly taken with the Lillian Russell Room and the Lillian Russell bathroom. I really don't know another place in the world that you could find a beautiful brass Lillian Russell bed, flowers, inlaid inside the john and a chamber pot.

MAN: We can create anything from awe, to fantasy, to sex appeal.

WOMAN: You know, we do have a very special problem. We have had missing quite a few gold telephones which we had specially made for our suite and a very beautiful tiger skin. According to legend, Sadie Thompson was sort of the bad lady of the islands and enticed her minister, I understand, well, we're living up the legend. The first person to stay in our Sadie Thompson room was a minister and his wife.

MAN: This suite was obviously not designed for the use of the rabble. The cost of putting it together and of acquiring the various objects that have been used within it was in excess of a million dollars. We're not just standing on the flatboards whistling Dixie and making a lot of noise. We have -- certainly we have moved hotels from the category of four walls, two windows, and an air conditioning outlet.

UTLEY: To some Texans, only an overgilded lily has the sweet smell of success.

MAN: If one is going to spend twenty-five hundred dollars a night to live in the Celestial Suite, one feels that only gold is good enough to dine in. The Celestial Suite contains thousands of dollars just in gold leaf.

MAN: We're highly selective in those to whom we offer the suite.

This suite, obviously is not designed for the use of the rabble.

UTLEY: The psychedelic light shows combined with rock music were a big thing in the 1960s for many young people it provided a visual trip without drugs. But hard rock is declining and such shrines as the Fillmore East and Electric Circus have closed down.

Now a new trend may be underway. Classical music light shows. One of its leading advocates is concert pianist Hilda Sohmer(?) who wants to get young people back to classical music. For the past two years she has been touring the country giving concerts at schools. And with her are the Pablo Lights, three young men who do the complicated visual portion of the show.

Miss Sohmer says young audiences are enthusiastic about her music and light shows and so we went to one recently at a New Jersey high school.

HILDA SOHMER: I started about three years ago when I read about Alexander Scriabin, the way out, wild romantic Russian composer who lived at the turn of the century. He had the idea to be a mixed media man. He was the first mixed media man ever. He wanted colored lights to accompany his music.

I'm fascinated with light show material. We usually use the same material for a given ... and then of course the light show ... improvisational, but we know approximately what we are going to do.

It really is beautiful.

The whole format of this light shows business; it comes from the rock world, which incidentally now, is quite dead, and the light shows tell me they much prefer working with classical music which pleases me because here I have three more converts into my world of music.

MAN: We like to think of ourselves more as soon of a jazz extemporaneous group. ... visual music. Even when we deal with classical music, because we like to say, all right, we have - x- amount programmed, but within that structure, we have the ability to improvise and that's the way it comes out. I think it's more exciting that way.

SOHMER: Music is the most important thing to me in my life. I think the life of anybody, life without music is no life.

children's concerts to my mind are the most important. I think it is an artist's responsibility to build audiences for the future. And the concert hall has been rather devoid of very young people lately.

MAN: It's really a joy to work with young people. They're very fresh and very interested. And we constantly get a lot of feedback from them. They like light shows, naturally. Most of the children and most of the young people that we've performed in front of have liked the light show very much.

CHILD: I really enjoyed it. I thought that the piano was in a way controlling the lights. I thought that it was really working together.

BOY: I think it had some good aspects because now the audience not only hears, you know, the music, but the light is also combined so now they're using their sight and they're actually getting you know some other aspect out of it.

GIRL: I thought the colors were beautiful, but you're less likely to concentrate on the music itself when you're looking at the colors, but I enjoyed it.

SOHMER: I like sometimes to use original art or to use for instance in programs, we are doing ... South Sea, New Guinea masks for the Villa Lobos piece. It's very difficult to predict what the future is going to be. But I don't say that light show and music is the only answer. But it has proven very successful.

MAN: The two really should come together. It seems like such a natural. When we did something with the San Antonio Symphony Orchestra, San Antonio's kind of conservative in its approach to this kind of thing. And they really gasped. I think that we're just breaking down a certain kind of barrier between the two worlds. And if this just opening doors for lots of other people to sort of come into it and do it, a lot more open now, the more the merrier.

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UTLEY: A new chapter in aviation history is being written by a growing brotherhood of thrill seekers. Whether this new era is pre-Wright Brothers or post 747 is hard to determine. Members of the clan build and fly what they call hang gliders(?).

The theory is that a man equipped with a proper wing can jump into the air, fly, while hanging from his glider, and then land safely on his feet and since this is done on the slope of a hill or the edge of a cliff, each attempt has its moment of truth, and each successful flight it's feeling of fulfillment.

What follows is an essay on one hang glider pilot. Why he does it. And what it feels like.

He lives in Southern California and his name is Dick Eiper(?).

DICK EIPER: I grew up in the Los Angeles area. I was born here. Used to be little two lane roads and a boulevard stop sign and now it's a four lane boulevard and fifteen left turns, no turns, red and green lights flashing. Changed drastically. I now live in a cellar. It's my little retreat. And I have my glider which is my other retreat.

The challenge to flying is like a challenge in a big wave to a surfer. You're hunting for a little bigger hill, a little better place to fly. A little bit longer ride. When you're actually flying, it's just you, and it's just freedom, flying through the air, and it's your stuff, and your kite in it. Just fantastic.

The cliff we jumped off, about ninety feet high. The flight lasts approximately fifteen seconds. But while you're actually up there, it seems like you're up there for an eternity.

It's a beautiful beautiful freedom. The only place I have left anymore.

UTLEY: Last week, in a flight that didn't end so happily, Dick Eiper crashed and broke his left leg. He will not fly again for at least nine months.

* * *

UTLEY: For the past two months, everyone's been talking about China but some of the best stories haven't been reported. They've been brought back by some of our friends who are working behind the scenes, members of the television crews who worked with the Chinese technicians. I'd like to tell you one of the stories about how one man managed to cut through the Red Chinese red taph.

NBC News Associate Producer Fred Flamenhof(?) who was in charge of film operations arrived in Peking well ahead of President Nixon. And his first job was to make sure that all of the film editing equipment was set up and ready to work. He was given

by a man named Mr. Chang. Well, the first thing Fred
ed were the editing tables. They were much too low. He
pointed this out to Mr. Chang who said there was nothing that
could be done.

"Your negotiating committee," he said, "agreed on the speci-
fications."

Well, Fred was not much interested in creating another committee
meeting, so thinking quickly, he said to Mr. Chang, "You're absolutely
right, the specifications were right at the time the committee
met. But since then, all our short film editors were assigned
to another story. We were only able to bring tall ones."

The next day the tables were raised to a workable height
without further discussion. Which proves, I suppose, that even
in the People's Republic of China, you can get things done,
as long as you can give a man a reason that will sound plausible
to his boss.

That's CHRONOLOG for this month. We will be back on April
28th, the fourth Friday of the month.

I'm Garrick Utley, NBC News. Good night.

May 17, 1984

HUGH DOWNS: Good evening. I'm Hugh Downs. And this is 20/20.

ANNOUNCER: On the ABC Newsmagazine, 20/20:

[voice-over] Tonight, a mystery from the secret world of America's spies. This man, in Berlin, Vietnam, Washington, always at the center of CIA operations.

FRANK SNEPP: He was the model CIA man, the model spy.

ANNOUNCER *[voice-over]*: Then a death, a body, an autopsy.

DONAL WEISZ: It's certainly someone who resembles my father, but I don't believe that it's my father.

ANNOUNCER *[voice-over]*: Is the master spy dead, or was there a deadly deception? Tom Jarriel with the mystery of "The Man Who Knew the Secrets."

The power of gossip.

BLYTHE HOLBROOKE: People feel they can't control gossip, and yet they know it has a great impact on their lives.

ANNOUNCER *[voice-over]*: Gossip can hurt celebrities, all of us, but we've always loved it — from Walter Winchell, Louella Parsons, Hedda Hopper, to Liz Smith — the biggest gossip today.

LIZ SMITH: I can't stand stuffed shirts, and it's fun to take shots at some of these people.

ANNOUNCER *[voice-over]*: Bob Brown with Liz Smith. They call her "America's Foremost Tattletale."

From halfway around the world, one of the most important medical breakthroughs of the century.

DOWNS: Five million children died last year alone in the stupor of dehydration caused by simple diarrhea.

ANNOUNCER *[voice-over]*: Now a few swallows of a simple solution brings children back from the very edge of death. Hugh Downs, with the astonishing story of the "Next Thing to a Miracle."

DOWNS: Up front tonight, an exclusive report on a first-class mystery in the dangerous world of America's spies. Now, for most of us our sense of the lethal twists and turns in the game of spy-versus-spy comes from fiction. Tom Jarriel is here tonight, and Tom, you've been investigating one of those rare situations in which spies surface just enough for us to get a look at them, anyway.

TOM JARRIEL: And it's a very unusual look, Hugh, into the life and maybe even the death of a master spy for the Central Intelligence Agency.

DOWNS: That's what intriguing — "maybe the death."

JARRIEL: This guy's life was so mysterious it's not even sure that he is dead. The CIA won't confirm that he ever worked there.

DOWNS: What is certain is that he knew some of the nation's most important secrets, though?

JARRIEL: Definitely. From interviews with people who knew him and also papers provided by his family for us, we are able to reveal some unusual details about his strange career. As is so often the case in a mystery like this, this story begins with the discovery of a corpse.

The tranquility of the place belies the mystery and the nature of the death that occurred here. This is where the body was found, a remote Maryland farm about one hour's drive outside of Washington, D.C.; the date, November 15th, 1982.

[voice-over] And this is the body they found. State police identified it as George Weisz, owner of the farm. *[on camera]* Police said Weisz killed himself in this garage, using a garden hose attached to the exhaust pipe, which pumped carbon monoxide fumes into the car where he sat.

[voice-over] The Maryland state medical examiner agreed. The official ruling, suicide.

Four days after the body was found it was cremated, and the case was closed. But there's more to it than that. George Weisz's life and death are a complex puzzle whose pieces still don't fit.

[on camera] 20/20 has been investigating the death of George Weisz for 18 months, and two key points have emerged, never disclosed until now. Point 1: There's evidence the body in the car was not that of George Weisz. Point 2: Weisz was no ordinary CIA agent, but for 30 years had been one of this country's most important spies.

[voice-over] Even after that Weisz was in charge of protecting America's most sensitive nuclear secrets from terrorist and enemy agents. In the tradition of master spies, George Weisz was faceless, anonymous.

DONAL WEISZ, son: He was very, very high up. Very high up. He was so important that nobody knows who he was.

FRANK SNEPP, former CIA agent: He was the model CIA man, the model spy. He was a very effective operator. In fact, one of the most effective I've ever met. If you want to talk about a John LeCarre character, you talk about George Weisz.

JARRIEL *[voice-over]*: This cable found among his personal effects was sent to Weisz by one of his CIA superiors. "There is no aspect of clandestine operations in which you were not heavily engaged. There are many in which your own approach and imagination accounted for an advance in the state of the art." The list of George Weisz's CIA assignments around the world is a roster of espionage hot spots. In the '50s it was post-war Berlin, 100 miles inside Communist territory. The CIA's number-one European spy post. George Weisz's children recall a bizarre childhood.

Mr. WEISZ: I grew up with the CIA. The children that I played with, the people that were my father's colleagues and my mother's friends are a "Who's Who" of the CIA in Europe.

NIKKI WEISZ, daughter: Well, I do remember people that we knew suddenly having different names, or people that we'd call Uncle This or That, and then suddenly they would have other last names. But I never really knew why.

JARRIEL *[interviewing]*: Who was your Uncle Bill?

Mr. WEISZ: Bill Harvey, the famous Bill Harvey, who blew his brains out in Rome.

JARRIEL: CIA?

Mr. WEISZ: CIA? Oh, heavy CIA from the beginning. Bill Harvey was the man who— was the man who pulled off one of the greatest coups— spy coups in the history of the cold war. He's the one who tapped the Russian telephone lines in East Berlin.

JARRIEL *[voice-over]*: In the '60s the big job for the CIA was in Vietnam, and so was George Weisz.

Mr. SNEPP: His job in Saigon was extremely powerful.

JARRIEL *[voice-over]*: Frank Snepp is an ex-CIA agent and an ABC News consultant on another topic. Snepp wrote a book condemning the agency's policies in the Vietnam war.

Mr. SNEPP: I was an analyst for the CIA station in Saigon. Weisz was running the division of the station which was designed to attract Communist agents and to neutralize them. In laymen's terms that means kill them, capture them, turn them around and what have you.

JARRIEL *[voice-over]*: After Vietnam Weisz went back to Berlin, but this time as CIA chief there. In 1974, a promotion. Weisz came back to CIA headquarters in Washington as chief of staff of the agency's covert operations department — dirty tricks. The spy was not to remain home for long.

[on camera] With the next assignment for George Weisz, Vienna, there was a hint that something big was in the works. Weisz was placed in charge of CIA operations here in Vienna, the city where the big boys — the CIA and the KGB — would try to outfox each other in one of the biggest spy deals ever. It was the bizarre and mysterious incident that came to be known as the Shadrin Affair.

[voice-over] Nicholas Shadrin was the highest-ranking Soviet military defector to the U.S. ever. In 1975 he was in Vienna for a meeting with Soviet spies — an unprecedented rendezvous arranged by the CIA. Shadrin vanished, never to be seen again.

[on camera] What happened? In the dangerous and ever-murky world of spy and counter-spy, it may never be known.

[voice-over] One theory is that George Weisz might have masterminded the whole operation, sending Shadrin back to the Russians in a complex double deal.

Mr. SNEPP: After all, that was his game — setting up an environment in which your opposition, the KGB, the Soviet intelligence people, would be so confused they might even end up killing off some of their own agents out of suspicion or confusion. That's the doublethink game. You want a master at that? You got it — George Weisz.

JARRIEL: A few years later the master spy was forced to retire, a new CIA director began the wholesale firing of cloak-and-dagger type agents in favor of spying by computer and satellite.

[voice-over] But Weisz rebounded, landing a top job in the Department of Energy. For three years Weisz was responsible for protecting our entire nuclear weapons production complex against terrorist and enemy spies. In the year before his alleged suicide, Weisz earned \$91,000 working as a consultant on several highly classified projects. One of them, a Pentagon intelligence operation, was doing work so secret that Weisz was required to work in a vault. Among Weisz's papers ABC reporters found a fascinating clue as to what he might have been working on in that vault — these notes for a meeting with his Pentagon boss discussing whether an enemy spy could penetrate the White House. So our investigation shows George Weisz was one of the few men who had access to many of America's top secrets — secrets about CIA operations around the world, secrets about our production of nuclear bombs. Did Weisz commit suicide? To the Maryland state police it was clear: there was this note in Weisz's handwriting that said simply, "I am tired." There were reports of career setbacks and a broken romance with a younger woman.

[on camera] But 20/20's investigation raises serious questions about the official version of the death, including the possibility that the body found in the car was not that of George Weisz. This is the autopsy report on the body found in the car, and it states that there were "no changes in the gall bladder." I'll repeat that: "no changes in the gall bladder." That means, according to medical experts, that when the body identified as George Weisz, the one in the car was autopsied, a normal gall bladder was found. Now take a look at this document. It's part of George Weisz's official medical records. Detailed surgical notes taken during an operation on Weisz on June 14th, 1978, at a military hospital in Frankfurt. "The gall bladder was now removed." So George Weisz had no gall bladder. This is Dr. Hormez Guard, the medical examiner who did that autopsy. Last August Dr. Guard was questioned by ABC News. Reporter Chuck Lewis asked about his findings.

ABC, "There was a gall bladder?" Dr. Guard, "Yes." ABC, "If the gall bladder had been removed, you would have noticed it?" Dr. Guard, "If it was removed, but that's not the case."

[voice-over] A few days later we interviewed Dr. Guard on camera. By now he was aware of the medical record showing Weisz's gall bladder had been removed.

[interviewing] In your report you say you found no changes in the gall bladder, which indicates there was a gall bladder there.

Dr. HORMEZ GUARD, medical examiner: Well, I believe so. But I am not so sure as to I paid any great attention on the gall bladder.

JARRIEL *[voice-over]*: But what about the big scar that a gall bladder operation leaves?

[interviewing] Did your father have a gall bladder scar, and if so, did you ever see it?

Mr. WEISZ: Oh, yes, my father had a gall bladder scar that—

JARRIEL: Was it conspicuous?

Mr. WEISZ: It went from here to here. We were on my deck, sunbathing. He took off his shirt and I went, "What happened to you? Did you run into a machete?" And he said, "Oh, no. I had my gall bladder removed."

JARRIEL *[voice-over]*: Dr. Guard insists he would have noticed a large gall bladder scar, had there been one. But in the autopsy report on the body found in the car, the one identified as George Weisz, there is no mention of any scar. Weisz's daughter sees only one possible explanation.

Ms. WEISZ: The explanation is that the body could not be the same.

JARRIEL: Not your father's body that was autopsied?

Ms. WEISZ: No. I mean, it seems to me pretty impossible.

JARRIEL *(voice-over)*: So, how was the body identified as George Weisz? Not knowing about the missing gall bladder, the police were satisfied. They had found the body in George Weisz's car, in George Weisz's garage, on George Weisz's farm.

Det. Sgt. JOHN REBURN, Maryland State Police: You take his driver's license. On there is a picture of him. It's a good picture. And that picture, to the investigators that is George Weisz in that car.

JARRIEL *(voice-over)*: Police say this man, Dale Young, a tenant on the Weisz farm, was the one who positively identified the body in the car as that of George Weisz. Young did not wish to speak on camera, but he told 20/20 he never got close enough to see the body clearly. Young said he was surprised to learn that he had provided the formal identification. When shown the close-up photograph of the body taken by police, Young said, "That doesn't look like Weisz to him." There was more confusion at the funeral home when three members of the family finally saw the body. Daughter Nikki said, "That's not my father."

Ms. WEISZ: It just didn't look like the person that I knew.

JARRIEL: When Weisz's wife, Etta Joe, saw the body in the coffin, she blurted out, "That's not my husband."

(on camera) But Weisz's oldest son, David — who works for the U.S. government and is stationed in Pakistan — David was certain the body was that of his father, and the order for cremation was signed. Sergeant Reburn says he showed the picture of the body in the car to Donal Weisz.

Sgt. REBURN: I said, "Is that your father?" And Donal told me that that was his father. George Weisz.

JARRIEL *(on camera)*: Donal Weisz says he has no recollection at all of that exchange ever taking place. He says this about the body and the photo.

Mr. WEISZ: It's certainly someone who resembles my father, but I don't believe that it's my father. It could be, but it's not.

JARRIEL: In addition to Donal, Weisz's wife and his daughter say this police photo of the body is not George Weisz. In trying to get to the bottom of all this, 20/20 asked the Maryland medical examiner's office for pictures taken at that autopsy. We were repeatedly told no such pictures were taken. Indeed, the autopsy records indicate that no photos were requested. But nine months after we were assured that no autopsy photographs existed, and not long after we told them about the gall bladder discrepancy, the medical examiner's office produced some photos. The family said that this picture does appear to be George Weisz, but this photo does not answer the crucial question. Did the body that was autopsied have a large gall bladder scar, as did George Weisz? This morgue picture doesn't help much, either. The shirt is off, but the Maryland medical examiner's office says there's no full-length nude shot, a picture that would tell us whether or not that scar is there. No photo, they claim, that would solve the mystery.

Mr. SNEPP: It is not inconceivable that the CIA or whoever would have substituted Weisz's face for that of the body in tampering with the photography. Again, it's so very easy.

JARRIEL: With cremation the identification mystery may never be solved. The last best chance was at the autopsy, but no fingerprints were taken, no X-rays, no dental charts — steps that could have provided positive identification of George Weisz. In fact, a key test — checking for drugs that might have contributed to his death, routine in cases like this — seems to have been requested, then crossed out. So this drug screen, which might have determined if something other than carbon monoxide contributed to the death, was never done. The state police indicate they might have pressed their investigation further if federal agents had only told them more about George Weisz.

Sgt. REBURN: I feel that if George Weisz was such a high operative and it was a factor in the security of our country, our agencies could have — they were notified. I did what I felt was right in notifying them. They certainly dropped the ball by not stepping forward and saying to the state police, "Hey, this guy here, we, you know, we should show a little more interest in that." We handled it as a suicide, a routine suicide, and did what we felt had to be done.

JARRIEL *(voice-over)*: The police say they have no plans to reopen the case, but there is

that matter of the gall bladder and the question of who that really was in the car. The Weisz family lawyer wants a better explanation.

TOM SIPPEL, family attorney: You cannot overlook the possibility that if, in fact, there was a gall bladder on that body that was autopsied, that it was not George Weisz. Cases have been won and lost on less evidence than that.

Mr. WEISZ: It would be nice to know that he was dead. There is no evidence, no clear evidence that he is dead.

JARRIEL: So what really happened? Well, we certainly don't know for sure, but there is an interesting footnote to all this. This week the CIA telephoned 20/20 to say that the agency had not killed George Weisz. And what's strange about that is we never asked.

DOWNS: What does that mean? Does that imply that maybe sometimes they do? What do you see as—

JARRIEL: As a policy they say they don't any longer.

DOWNS: What do you see as the possibilities here? I know there are a lot of them.

JARRIEL: They're intriguing and they're endless. Hugh. First of all, his greatest value would be to the Russians. Did they kidnap him, substitute a body and take him off somewhere to try to pick his brain for that classified information he had? A second possibility is that George Weisz is an eternal spy; he's off on another assignment, and this was all a cover for a new assignment. That would be very cruel to his family, though.

DOWNS: It would.

JARRIEL: A third possibility is that there was a lax police investigation, a mix-up at the morgue, and George Weisz did indeed commit suicide, as the authorities contend.

DOWNS: Do you think we'll ever know?

JARRIEL: I doubt it.

DOWNS: Thank you, Tom. *[voice-over]* Well, next, gossip can be infuriating, it can be trivial, it can be funny, but it has a place in our lives. Tonight, Bob Brown gossips with America's foremost tattletale, Liz Smith, right after this.

[commercial break]

DOWNS: Think for a moment about gossip, which we are usually told not to do, but it plays a big part in our lives. It helps us find out what's going on in the neighborhood, in the office, in the nation, with indifferent accuracy, perhaps. But Bob Brown has something to say on the value that we place on gossip in our society.

BOB BROWN: Well, Hugh, only that you've heard the expression, "Talk is cheap," and in this case it really isn't because these professional gossips are among the highest-paid newspaper columnists in the country.

DOWNS: And you have been spending some time with one of them, Liz Smith. Now, I don't know where she got the title, but she's being called America's foremost tattletale.

BROWN: It's a title that was given to her by a magazine writer, Hugh, but she is syndicated in more than 60 newspapers, and she does use the tools of the trade, the telephone and the party invitations and the sources, of course, but that's big-time gossip. All you have to do to see it working around you at any level is just look and listen.

[voice-over] If you are the source, it's first-hand information. As soon as someone repeats what you said — maybe accurately, maybe not — that's when it can become gossip, informal information from a private source that, at its best, is a privileged insight or the valuable first word on a subject. But it doesn't undergo the scrutiny we apply to information that's placed on the public record, and so, at its worst, gossip is unproven, nasty, malicious and destructive.

BLYTHE HOLBROOKE, writer: People say it's trivial. It's not. People feel they can't control gossip, and yet they know it has a great impact on their lives.

BROWN [voice-over]: Even though she was a Yale graduate and a Fulbright scholar, Blythe Holbrooke found gossip to be such a pervasive part of our lives that she wrote a book about it.

[interviewing] Why does gossip have such a bad reputation?

Ms. HOLBROOKE: I think it's because it's important. What people say about you will

B-03

CIA denies plotting to kill fraud suspect

WASHINGTON (AP) — The CIA yesterday sharply denied an allegation carried by ABC News that the spy agency engaged in a plot to kill Honolulu investment counselor Ronald Rewald, who claims his failed company was a CIA front.

In a rare public statement, the CIA declared that "the allegations are totally false . . . As ABC knows, the CIA along with the rest of the U.S. government is prohibited by law from engaging in or contemplating assassination."

The CIA asked that ABC News retract its reports on the Rewald case that were broadcast Sept. 19 and 20. Rewald faces charges that he defrauded investors in his investment counseling firm of millions of dollars.

In response to the CIA statement, ABC News spokeswoman Joanna Bistany said, "We stand

by our story." She added that ABC News "never accused the CIA of attempting an assassination," but only reported what was alleged by Rewald and Scott Barnes, who is described by ABC News as having an "extensive intelligence background."

In its Sept. 20 report, ABC News quoted Barnes as saying he took a job as a prison guard in the Honolulu jail where Rewald is being held on fraud charges.

Barnes said he was told by his CIA contact that "we've got to take him (Rewald) out . . . You know, kill him," an assignment Barnes said he refused. ABC News did not identify Barnes' alleged CIA contact. The CIA said Barnes was inventing the story.

The CIA has acknowledged using Rewald's firm, Bishop, Baldwin, Rewald, Dillingham and Wong, as a mail drop.

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